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IN THE PRESS

Wolcott celebrates new solar panels

A lively, entertaining presentation and ribbon cutting marked the dedication of Henry A. Wolcott Elementary's new solar panels. On Friday, Dec. 14, the West Hartford school welcomed special guests, town residents and the entire school community to listen to speakers talk about the panels. **PAGE 13.**



Grieving with Newtown

During a vigil in Blue Back Square Sunday, Dec. 16, West Hartford residents lit candles for the victims of the tragic event that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown last Friday, Dec. 14. Approximately 500 residents attended the vigil on the cold, rainy night to honor the lives and mourn the loss of the 20 Newtown children and six adults. For more, turn to page 8.

Photo by Alison Jalbert



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From left to right:
On the Wolcott school roof with newly installed solar panels: Jerry Robock, Northeast Smart Energy, LLC; Ron Araujo, CL&P; Bob Wall, CEFIA; Diana McCarthy-Bercury, Clean Energy Communities; Terry Schmidt, Board of Education

Photo by Maria G. O'Donnell

Wolcott Elementary celebrates newly installed solar panels

By Maria G. O'Donnell
Correspondent

A lively, entertaining presentation and ribbon cutting marked the dedication of Henry A. Wolcott Elementary's new solar panels.

On Friday, Dec. 14, the West Hartford school welcomed special guests, town residents and the entire school community to listen to speakers talk about the panels.

Interspersed among the speakers were a performance by the

school's Wolcott band of "You Are My Sunshine," a student presentation of "A Play about Green Energy," and a holiday song, "O Tannenbaum," by the school choir.

West Hartford residents and town buildings participated in the Clean Energy Communities program offered under the Energize Connecticut platform by the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority and Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund, through which Wolcott earned the panels, which

were funded by the CEFIA and a townwide fundraiser with Whole Foods.

Town Hall, Conard High School and Hall High School previously had solar photovoltaic systems installed on them as a result of participation in the program.

According to CEFIA, "The program enables Connecticut cities and towns to earn clean energy systems and energy efficiency grants from the respective funds by achieving specific clean energy and

energy efficiency milestones."

During the Dec. 14 event, Dr. Plato Karafelis, principal of Wolcott Elementary, addressed the packed auditorium. "Three percent of our energy comes from the solar panels," he said. "We do need coal, oil and gas for energy, but we should use wind, solar and geothermal more because it's free."

He showed a video of himself demonstrating where the energy from the solar panels comes from in the basement and how it's dis-

tributed through pipes. In the video, Karafelis goes into the school attic and out onto the roof, where he climbs a ladder to the topmost roof where the new panels are located.

Suddenly, an Italian chef puppet took the screen and thanked everyone who helped in getting the solar panels. The students erupted in laughter.

Karafelis invited the mayor of

SOLAR PANELS on page 14

Plans for second phase of Trout Brook Trail discussed at public meeting

By Abigail Albair
Editor

At least one resident believes that there may be potential for more funding to complete the Trout Brook Trail, which will soon stretch farther north, in a shorter time frame.

Chair of the West Hartford Bi-

cycle Committee Scott Franklin explained during a public information session on the trail, held Wednesday, Dec. 12, that a "natural link" between the trail and the busway was recently highlighted by the committee.

During a committee meeting, Franklin said the discussion of CT-fastrack, the New Britain-Hartford

Busway project, which will have a station on New Park Avenue at New Britain Avenue, included the fact that a bike-sharing program could potentially include kiosks at the busway. Franklin also said that, during a Bike Walk Connecticut meeting, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Daniel Esty ex-

pressed support for multi-use trails, such as the Trout Brook Trail.

The first portion of the trail was completed in 2008. The second phase is scheduled for completion in 2014, and five more phases are planned to follow at undetermined times in the future.

"We'd like to get more funding

to finish this thing sooner, not just in seven phases," Franklin said. "We may not all be in favor of the busway, but it's going to be built and if we embrace it and the governor knows we're embracing it, there could be more money there to build this thing."

See **TRAIL** on page 15

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Bugbee named School of Distinction

By Jennifer Senofonte
Staff Writer

Bugbee Elementary School has been named a School of Distinction, the highest classification under Connecticut's new school performance index.

The new system comes on the heels of the No Child Left Behind waiver, which enabled the state Department of Education and districts to replace the annual yearly progress report required under NCLB with the Connecticut-designed annual performance targets. Previously, NCLB identified schools in need of improvement only.

The new targets include performance goals based on standardized testing, progress tracing, graduation rates and subgroup performance.

Schools are named Schools of Distinction because of advanced performance, high levels of subgroup achievement and achievement gap progress.

Bugbee was classified as such because of high overall performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test.

"This is really an important moment for us. We'll look forward to the future and the potential of more schools [being identified as Schools of Distinction]," Superintendent Karen List said during the

"As a Bugbee parent, I am thrilled, of course, and have witnessed firsthand for 11 years the remarkable work they do at Bugbee."

—Board of Education
Chair Bruce Putterman

Dec. 4 Board of Education meeting. "We're very proud of the high performance at that school. It's certainly a testimony to our model of continuous improvement."

The new accountability system continues to track struggling schools in new categories: turnaround, review and focus.

List said that West Hartford does not have any schools in the struggling categories. She added that they are fortunate to have Bugbee identified as a School of Distinction, and she applauded the faculty for their work.

"As a Bugbee parent, I am thrilled, of course, and have witnessed firsthand for 11 years the remarkable work they do at Bugbee," Board of Education Chairman Bruce Putterman said.



Solar panels on roof of Henry A. Wolcott Elementary School

Photo by Maria G. O'Donnell

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West Hartford, Scott Slifka, to the stage. The children greeted him – as they did each of the other guests – in chorus, politely addressing him: "Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor."

The mayor encouraged students, "I want you to be good citizens, to act responsibly. Not everybody is as fortunate to have all these energy sources available. Don't you want other kids to have the same as Wolcott? The way to do that is through clean energy."

He noted the contributions of Whole Foods and the Clean Energy Fund bringing the panels to the school. "If you guys lead on issues like this, you can change the world," he said.

Board of Ed Vice Chair Elin Swanson Katz, who is also consumer counsel for the state, said, "I'm an advocate, a lawyer for energy issues, who speaks out for a cause – water, electricity, natural gas," she explained.

She told the students, "You guys are my bosses; I work for you. I'm proud of West Hartford because we made smart choices. In 2005, we chose to join the Clean Energy Communities of Connecticut. We're in the top three towns in the state. This solar panel system is controlling energy costs. They turn sunshine into energy – was that a good choice?"

"Yes!" exclaimed the children.

Tim Brennan of the West Hartford Clean Energy Task Force said, "You're very lucky to have

leaders to get the panels on the roof. You kids are way more powerful than you think. It's about advocacy. Kids, tell your parents and leaders to make it happen."

Ron Araujo, CL&P manager of conservation and load management, said, "West Hartford has always been a leader and paves the way to clean energy and energy efficiency. Take this message home with you."

Bob Wall, director of marketing and outreach for CEFIA, told the crowd that the website EnergizeCT.com provides smart energy choices and educational sources. Wall said, "I thank all the schools for participating in the Energy Conservation Challenge in November. Keep up the good work."

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